

Commissioner Deborah A. Gist's Weekly Field Memo
Friday, September 23, 2011

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Action Item Calendar

Today (September 23): Erate funding forms due
Today (September 23): District testing schedules due
Today (September 23): Lists of 12th grade students retaking NECAP due
Monday (September 25): Updates to *Educational Directory* due
October 24: Student enrollment and addresses due
October 27: School Safety and Mitigation Conference registration form due
November 1: Submission and snapshot reports due
November 15: Deadline for final selections of district teachers of the year
December 1: Districts verify all personnel assignments
June 30, 2012: Schools and districts submit final personnel assignments

Notes from Commissioner Gist:

1. Many districts select local Teachers of the Year

I'm pleased to let you know that the majority of districts have selected a district Teacher of the Year and have submitted to RIDE the nomination papers for the 2012 Rhode Island Teacher of the Year. Our team will begin reviewing the materials very soon, and we expect to select a great Rhode Island Teacher of the Year once again. As we all know, we have many great teachers in every district in our state, and it's important that we recognize their excellent work and their commitment to our schools and to our students. As I have noted to you in recent field memos, I would like every LEA to select a local Teacher of the Year. We have developed a streamlined application and extended the deadline for the District Teacher of the Year selections, which we have posted on our Web site:

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/EducatorQuality/Recognition/default.aspx>

If you have not yet selected a 2012 Teacher of the Year, I will be calling you over the next few weeks to check on the status of your selection.

2. President Obama allows states to apply for flexibility on NCLB

I was honored to be invited to the White House, along with Governor Chafee, to hear the President and Secretary Duncan present information on how states can apply for flexibility

regarding some of the provisions of the No Child Left Behind Act. Here is part of the White House news release on this issue:

In an effort to support local and state education reform across America, the White House today outlined how states can get relief from provisions of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act – or No Child Left Behind (NCLB) – in exchange for serious state-led efforts to close achievement gaps, promote rigorous accountability, and ensure that all students are on track to graduate college- and career-ready.

States can request flexibility from specific NCLB mandates that are stifling reform, but only if they are transitioning students, teachers, and schools to a system aligned with college- and career-ready standards for all students, developing differentiated accountability systems, and undertaking reforms to support effective classroom instruction and school leadership.

“To help states, districts and schools that are ready to move forward with education reform, our administration will provide flexibility from the law in exchange for a real commitment to undertake change. The purpose is not to give states and districts a reprieve from accountability, but rather to unleash energy to improve our schools at the local level,” President Obama said.

Here is a statement I released yesterday:

When this act became law almost 10 years ago, we did not have the kinds of data systems that are in place in most states, and the levels of analysis and support that states now

can provide districts was not imaginable. Today, we have an opportunity to improve and refine our accountability system in return for a renewed commitment to rigorous standards. As we move forward in our efforts to transform education in Rhode Island, we will remain firmly committed to attaining high levels of student achievement, to closing achievement gaps, and to preparing all students for success.

As we receive guidance from the U.S. Department of Education, we will review our accountability system and systems for school support to determine whether we should take advantage of the opportunity. I will be working closely with you and other stakeholders as we review this matter. For more information on the President's announcement, see:

<http://www.ed.gov/esea/flexibility>

and

http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/fact_sheet_bringing_flexibility_and_focus_to_education_law_0.pdf

3. RIDE to release NECAP science results on Tuesday

We will release the 2011 NECAP science results on **Tuesday** (September 27), at 10:30 a.m., at Mt. Hope High School. Representatives from several schools and districts that made significant gains this year will join me at the news conference. Congratulations to all the schools and districts that made progress this year!

As a reminder, on Tuesday @ 10:30 a.m., you may release your local NECAP science results to the public. Thank you for your cooperation with this news embargo, and I am sorry that we had to postpone an earlier scheduled release date. We will post the NECAP Science Results Report on our Web site on Tuesday, at:

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/Assessment/results.aspx>

4. First Early Learning forum scheduled for today (Friday)

As Rhode Island prepares to apply for a Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge Grant, the Rhode Island Early Learning Council has scheduled two public forums on early-childhood education in Rhode Island.

The forums will offer Rhode Islanders an opportunity to share ideas about early learning, child care, and child development in Rhode Island. Information presented at the forum will help the council members to prepare the Early Learning Challenge Grant for submission to the U.S. Department of Education. If successful, the grant application could bring \$50 million to Rhode Island to improve early learning.

The first forum is scheduled for **today** (Friday), at 4:30 p.m., at North Providence High School, 1828 Mineral Spring Ave.

The second forum is scheduled for **Wednesday** (September 28), at 6 p.m., at West Warwick High School, 1 Webster Knight Dr.

I hope you and members of your community will feel free to come to these events to provide feedback and insight on opportunities for advancing early learning in Rhode Island.

From RIDE:

**5. RIDE webinars on comprehensive assessments begin
Wednesday**

Please see this notice from our Office of Instruction, Assessment, and Curriculum:

RIDE will kick off the Comprehensive Assessment System webinar series on **Wednesday** (September 28), from 9:30 - 10:30 a.m. This first webinar will address how a comprehensive assessment system can support other RIDE initiatives, including educator evaluation, the transition to the Common Core State Standards, and the Race to the Top assessment initiatives. To register for the webinar, please visit:

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/assessment/CAS.aspx>.

**6. RIDE posts FAQs for parents and families on the 2011
Secondary Regulations**

Please see this message from our Office of Multiple Pathways:

You should have received your new student brochures and parent letters that contain information about the diploma requirements for the Classes of 2014 and 2015. Most districts received these materials at the central office, to be distributed to secondary schools for use with the current 9th- and 10th-grade classes.

A parent FAQ document is now available for your use in communicating with your families regarding changes in the 2011 Secondary Regulations. It is available on our Web site, at:

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/HighSchoolReform/>.

Please make this parent-friendly FAQ document available to all parents and families. We will also have this FAQ document translated into Spanish and Portuguese, and we will post those letters on our Web site as soon as they are available.

Please contact Karsten Cash (karsten.cash@ride.ri.gov) with any questions.

7. RIDE revises protocol for PLP data collection

Please see this notice from our Office of Instruction, Assessment, and Curriculum:

This year RIDE will again be collecting the Personal Literacy Plan (PLP) data through the eRIDE system. This switch from submitting an Excel document to uploading the student-level data into a program file within eRIDE Enrollment Census for PLP Data Collection was accomplished in the 2010-11 school year. In order to capture all the efforts made in your LEA in PLP implementation from September 2011 to the February 1, 2012, reporting, revisions to the protocol must be made for this upcoming school year.

To ensure the accuracy and timeliness of reporting, please inform key staff members (data managers, PLP coordinators,

et al.) about these revisions so that they access and follow the detailed directions found in the PLP Data Collection 2011-12 document. The document is available on the PLP page on the RIDE Web site, or it may be accessed directly using the following link:

http://www.ride.ri.gov/Instruction/DOCS/documents/Personal_Literacy_Plan_PLP_Data_Collection_2011-2012.pdf

If you need assistance or require additional information about the PLP reporting requirements, please do not hesitate to contact RIDE key personnel.

For program- related questions, please contact Diane Girard, at diane.girard@ride.ri.gov or 222-8479.

For technical questions, please contact the eRIDE HelpDesk, at helpdesk@ride.ri.gov or 222-8400.

8. RIDE seeks feedback on draft *Rhode Island Comprehensive Literacy Plan*

Please see this notice from our Office of Instruction, Assessment, and Curriculum:

We are requesting you to encourage your administrators, teachers, support staff, parents, and community members to read the draft 2011 *Rhode Island Comprehensive Literacy Plan* (RICLP) and to provide feedback during the six-week public-feedback period (Monday, September 26 – November 4).

The RICLP serves to unify all state literacy initiatives for students from birth through grade 12. The RICLP will guide the literacy efforts throughout Rhode Island LEAs and early care & education centers. Furthermore, it is the expectation that teacher-preparation programs within institutions of higher education will use the RICLP to inform and augment course and program decisions at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. It should be noted that the RICLP revises and expands the 2005 Rhode Island PreK-12 Literacy Policy.

Your LEA's participation would be greatly appreciated and would ensure that the RICLP will guide all educators to meet the literacy needs of all students.

Click the following link to access the RICLP document:

http://www.ride.ri.gov/Instruction/DOCS/RICLP/RICLP_Public_Comment_09_2011.pdf

Click the following link to access the RICLP feedback survey:

<http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/RICLPSurvey>

Important:

- The survey will conclude on November 4; and
- The survey allows participants to respond to individual section(s) of the document that they feel to be most pertinent.

9. Commissioner issues two decisions

Our Legal Office notes that this week RIDE has issued these Commissioner's Decisions:

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/applications/RideDirectory/LegalTreeView.aspx?g=2011/0021-11> M. Doe v. North Providence 9-21-11.pdf

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/applications/RideDirectory/LegalTreeView.aspx?g=2011/0022-11> In the Matter of the Residency of Student K. Doe 09-21-11.pdf

Commissioner's decisions are posted on our Web site, at:

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/RIDE/LegalSearch.aspx>

10. RIDE to call together group of support professionals for work on evaluations

Please see this notice from our Office of Educator Quality and Certification:

As we begin working on the Model Evaluation System for Support Professionals, we wanted to make you aware of the process. Our support professionals include: school psychologists, social workers, school counselors, speech-language pathologists, reading specialists, and school nurse-teachers. Over the next few weeks, we will begin assembling a work group made up of at least one person from each support-professional group as well as library/media specialists. The various support-professional organizations will be asked to identify individuals to serve on our work group. The work group will collaborate to create an evaluation system that will meet the needs of support

professionals. Our first meeting with our work group, once the members have been identified, will be November 18. We will meet once each month thereafter.

11. Training for evaluators continues as Module One ends

Please see this notice from our Office of Educator Quality and Certification:

Module One training has ended. If for any reason there are evaluators in your districts who did not attend Module One, please notify us. We will determine if a make-up session is needed.

Please continue to ensure that all evaluators register for subsequent training sessions. As we review feedback from training sessions, we will examine ways to provide additional supports. RIDE ISPs will soon be available to support those districts using the RIDE ISPs.

If you would like to share specific suggestions for additional supports, please e-mail edeval@ride.ri.gov.

Thank you for your continued commitment to implementing new educator-evaluation systems this year. We know everyone is working very hard!

12. Process is open for districts to submit rosters of personnel assignments

Please see this notice from our Office of Educator Quality and Certification:

Thank you for submitting your work assignment reports through the Personnel Assignment Process (PAP) system for the 2010-11 school year. The PAP is now open for you to enter and revise work assignment rosters for the current school year.

We have recently been asked about error and warning messages during the submission of the PAP reports. Please be advised that all error messages must be resolved prior to the submission of the PAP report. Warning messages are provided to inform you of the current status of educators in your district that may require action on your part. *Warning messages regarding I-Plan requirements can be disregarded.*

Please note the following important PAP dates:

December 1: Districts verify all assignments
June 30, 2012: Schools and districts submit final assignments

Please contact Kevin Kassebaum, at 222-8803 or Kevin.Kassebaum@ride.ri.gov, if you have any questions.

13. RIDE to update business managers about Race to the Top budget

Please see this notice from our Finance Office:

As you may know, RIDE has hired induction coaches to support our beginning teachers, as part of our Race to the Top initiative. Each LEA has an allocation, budgeted in AcceleGrants, to support induction-coach services and the development of the induction program.

Because our Race to the Top (RTTT) plan is a unified, statewide plan, the LEA allocations help our state to build and sustain a robust induction system that is data-driven and instructionally focused. Under this structure, all LEAs participating in the induction program under RTTT will receive optimal services to accelerate beginning-teacher growth and to impact student achievement.

No budget adjustments are required at this time for LEAs participating in the induction program, as the total cost of the entire program will be prorated across all LEAs. For those LEAs that have fully released teachers to assume the induction-coach role, those teachers will be paid through a statewide contract, similar to the process used for teaching fellows.

Please share this information with your business managers and human-resource officers. Please note that RIASBO will be providing time at its next meeting, on October 20, at 8:45 a.m., at the Radisson Hotel in Warwick, for RIDE to update the business managers on the Race to the Top budget and to train them on ARRA reporting. If you have any questions about the induction program or the way your budget supports this work, please contact Hilda Potrzeba, at Hilda.Potrzeba@ride.ri.gov, for program questions, or Nina Lennon at Nina.Lennon@ride.ri.gov, for budget questions.

From the U.S. Department of Education:

- 14. President to deliver Back to School Speech on Wednesday**

Please see this message from the U.S. Department of Education Communications Office:

President Obama will deliver his third annual Back to School Speech on **Wednesday (September 28), at 1:30 p.m.**, at Benjamin Banneker Academic High School in Washington, D.C.

In speaking directly to students in past years, the President has encouraged them to study hard and take responsibility for their education, urging them to set goals, to believe in themselves, and to be the authors of their own destinies.

The Back to School speech will be live streamed on <http://www.whitehouse.gov/live> so that schools and classrooms across the country may watch the speech. For more information about watching the speech, please visit:

www.whitehouse.gov/back-to-school.

Schools and classrooms may also watch the speech live on MSNBC as a special feature of NBC News' "Education Nation" -- part of NBC's weeklong commitment to education reports and programming across the network's shows and platforms. "Education Nation" begins Sunday, September 25.

We encourage you to share this information broadly.

Other:

15. Applications sought for Prudential Spirit of Community Awards

The Prudential Foundation and the National Association of Secondary School Principals are seeking applications from Rhode Island students in grades 5 – 12 for the 17th annual Prudential Spirit of Community Awards. The awards honor outstanding community service by young people. The Rhode Island award winners at the middle- and high-school levels will receive an all-expense-paid trip to Washington, D.C., for four days of recognition, as well as a \$1,000 award. For more information, see:

<http://spirit.prudential.com/view/page/soc>

RIDE will post this field memo on Tuesday, at:

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/Commissioner/fieldmemos/default.aspx>